



ESS May 2024 Newsletter

Distributed to all Local Emergency Programs

Reflection and Appreciation

The Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) ESS Program Office would like to take this opportunity to extend our appreciation to ESS teams and responders in the North and across the province for your strong commitment and active engagement in your communities, particularly at this time given the early wildfire season.

We were grateful for the chance to connect with ESS responders at the Network of Emergency Support Services Teams (NESST) conference in Kamloops in April, and the conference was a resounding success thanks to the hard work and dedication of the NESST organizing committee.

We would also like to take this opportunity to share some program highlights and updates, with more information to come in coming weeks.

Emergency Management Central Booking Portal

During the fall/winter 2023 engagement sessions, we heard about the importance of real-time information on accommodations, and about exploring the use of technology to enable access to real-time information on commercial accommodation availability.

The BC Hotel Association, in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport and EMCR, is developing a pilot for the Emergency Management Central Booking Portal. It will help ESS teams make commercial accommodation bookings for evacuees during emergency events.

Once available, the booking portal will be accessible to ESS responders in Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities, administrators, and EMCR staff. The booking portal would not be accessible directly to evacuees, to support careful management of accommodation and this important resource during emergencies. The booking portal would be an additional tool that ESS teams could use, and is not meant to replace 'services first' or group lodging options when those options are preferred.

The booking portal will begin with a pilot in Prince George, Kelowna and Kamloops, regional host communities for many large-scale events. More communities will be able to onboard to the booking portal after the pilot is finished.

ERA Enhancements

As part of ongoing enhancement of the ERA tool and based on feedback received during our late 2023 engagements with Indigenous governing bodies, local authorities, and other partners, we are continuing to improve ERA.

ERA changes you can now expect to see include:

- Streamlined needs assessment – Reducing questions that are not required for the purpose of assessment to help improve the amount of time it takes to complete the process. Updates include:
 - Combined household and pet information on one page
 - Removal of question about how the household has been affected
 - Removal of question about recovery planning
 - Removal of question about referral to other supports in the reception centre
 - Removal of questions about dietary requirements and medication requirements
 - More clear and concise questions to determine what supports are required

ESS responders may still gain this information in conversation with an evacuee if it is needed to connect them with appropriate supports, but we heard that these questions were often unnecessary, or inappropriate, and took longer to process.

- Billeting change – The term ‘billeting’ will change to ‘accommodation/shelter allowance’ in ERA. Evacuees will be able to quickly receive the allowance through Interac e-Transfer. More information about this shift will be shared in coming weeks.

Cultural Safety in ESS

Since last fall, about 500 ESS responders have attended the Cultural Safety and Trauma Informed Practices in Reception Centres training offered by EMCR and the First Nations Health Authority, focused on providing more culturally safe evacuee care. Thank you to everyone who has attended and encouraged your fellow ESS team members to be part of Cultural Safety training.

On April 4, 2024, the [Premier's Expert Task Force on Emergencies released its recommendations](#), including that government:

- Further develop ERA-enabled pathways to improve timely access to supports for evacuees during large-scale evacuations, and reduce congestion at in-person reception centres, including virtual and digital options.
- Consolidate and improve accessibility to ESS training so that responders can be trained quickly and effectively to deliver supports in a culturally safe, trauma-informed manner.
- Review rates and make more supports available through Interac e-Transfer so that evacuees can decide how to best meet their needs, based on the principle that evacuees are experts in their own needs.

More will be shared in coming weeks about work to implement the recommendations.

Campaign

Building on our prior partnership, EMCR and the Ministry of Citizens' Services - Service BC are working together to help more people be prepared this wildfire season. In early May, Service BC launched a pilot at several offices (Prince George, Fort St John, Kamloops, Penticton, and Williams Lake) with display messages/posters encouraging people to: check their insurance coverage, make a plan to stay with family/friends, download the BC Services Card App/get authenticated and create an ERA profile. Service BC agents at these offices are also having conversations with people, encouraging and assisting them with BC Services Card App registration/authentication and ERA profile creation.

Training Improvements – New Course

The new one-day course Introduction to Registration and Supports (EMRG 1635) launched as a pilot at the NESST conference in April, and officially launched on May 4. This course allows new ESS responders to be trained in just one day to conduct a needs assessment and issue supports, including using the ERA tool. More information about the course is in the ESS Training Update bulletin (February 2024) and a Q&A document will be shared soon.

ERA Onboarding and Orientation

Still need to onboard the ERA tool? Emergency Program Coordinators and ESS Directors, please contact essmodernization@gov.bc.ca to book a time.

Have you renewed your Supplier Agreements?

Important Reminder: As part of seasonal readiness, please reach out to all your suppliers to get updated contact information and remind them of processes for reimbursement. Now is also a crucial time to ensure your supplier list is updated in ERA, including discussing your supplier lists with mutual aid partners.